

Increasing Visibility of Indigenous Peoples Through Digital Storytelling

By Amanda Cheromiah, Laguna Pueblo, Doctoral Student, Higher Education



Amanda draws inspiration from Dr. Tessie Naranjo of Pueblo of Santa Clara --

"Storytelling helps us move from one generation to the next, carrying the stories of our past with us... Through stories, there is always the hope that the young ones will become responsible for and carry on the cultural knowledge of the elders."

Courtesy of Amanda Cheromiah

I literally and figuratively see the world with a different lens. I have a blinding visual impairment called Stargardt Disease. I am a photographer that empowers generations of Indigenous students to proclaim their narratives through digital storytelling. Among all populations, Native American students have the lowest graduation, recruitment, and retention rates. It is imperative to increase the visibility of Indigenous Peoples through digital media, because students' narratives provide valuable insight to educators and administrators on how to better engage them within higher education.

Additionally, I have created a personal library featuring photographs of Indigenous peoples at the University of Arizona. When photographing Native American students, I am intentional in crafting and honoring their tribal heritage. I often ask the students to wear turquoise, because I feel that it is an identifiable symbol audiences equate as Native American. Perhaps without the jewelry, their identity can be questionable. I struggle with this idea, because it perpetuates a stereotype, yet I feel the need to ensure audiences that my photographs feature Native People.

Photos by Amanda Cheromiah --



Top: Traditional dancer.

Bottom: Mentors and mentees mixer.



Left: UA Sunrise ceremony



Mykka Juan, aspiring Wildcat and his grandpa Richard Juan.



Miss Native American University of Arizona Ambassadors. Left, Amber Laughing & Right Hanna Throssell



Sonoran Desert

To view more of Amanda's photos visit her photography portfolio: www.amandacheromiah.com